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Baking during COVID-19: Coping, Connecting, Creating

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Senior Research 2020-2021

Introduction

In the spring of 2020, university students across the country were instructed to leave their campuses and return home to complete the remainder of their semester remotely due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the United States. Americans of all ages found themselves in a lockdown that prohibited many of the activities and social interactions that had previously occupied their daily lives. While most working adults continued their jobs from home or searched for new employment, or began the at-home education of their young children, Millennials and members of Generation Z, specifically students, found themselves with excess time on their hands. Creativity and energy that had previously been channelled into extracurricular activities and student endeavors now existed without an obvious direction. To combat this, a number of trends began to emerge and spread over social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, including choreographed dances, a whipped coffee drink, tie-dying clothes, and baking. This study focuses on the rise of baking as a pastime during the COVID-19 quarantine period, which, due to the recency of the onset of the pandemic, has garnered only a limited amount of academic research. Using survey and focus group data from students at a Midwest liberal arts college, collected in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, this study analyzes young adult perspectives and experiences with baking to understand the motivations and implications of baking as a hobby during the COVID-19 quarantine period.

This study is primarily exploratory, and aims to discover *who* was baking during quarantine as well as *what* people were baking. The use of focus groups also provides insight into *why* people may have been baking as a hobby and *how* it made them feel. With answers to these questions, we are able to gain insight into some of the effects of, and responses to, COVID-19 experienced by college students. For example, different socioeconomic groups likely

experienced different life changes following the onset of the pandemic, thus altering the motivations behind taking up baking (i.e. baking out of necessity or for pleasure). Further, these motivations are likely to be indicative of the feelings and sensations that college students were lacking during the pandemic. In recognizing what these feelings may be, we can begin to discern some of the social and personal needs held by young adults that are not satisfied by the life tasks which persisted throughout the quarantine period, and how baking may have fulfilled these needs.

In this paper, I first review the relevant literature on the prevalence of baking during the COVID-19 quarantine period, and three existing motivators for baking: coping, connecting, and creating. I then describe my data, drawing on the survey results from 183 respondents and four focus groups, all recruited from a liberal arts college in the Midwest. Next, I discuss the results of my analysis of the survey data and thematically coded focus group data. Finally, I address the answers to three questions: Who was baking? What were people baking? And why were people baking? I conclude that bakers with previous experience, woman-identifying individuals, and domestic students were most likely to be baking as a hobby during quarantine, and that the most common category of baked goods being made were sweets. I also conclude that participants were baking for three primary reasons: to cope, to connect, and to create.

Literature Review

This study draws on multiple bodies of literature. First, I review recent literature that discusses the changes in food habits caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the increased trend of baking. Then, I discuss the literature surrounding three concepts that have been found to act as motivators for baking: coping, connecting, and creating. This literature

ranges from national reports of food habits during COVID-19 to studies specifically focusing on the act of baking and social theory surrounding the alienation of labor.

Changing Food Habits and the Rise of Baking.

As the United States began its initial lockdown in March 2020, due to the increasing cases of COVID-19, Americans saw their foodscapes immediately begin to change. For some who experienced job loss as a result of the pandemic, food insecurity became a new -or newly increased- concern. For others, restaurant closures indicated that they would no longer be able to rely on take-out as a meal source (Niles et al., 2020). Above all, Americans found themselves spending more time at home with their families: for leisure, recreation, school, work, and as the primary site for eating (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020). Previous food sources became less accessible, with restaurant closures and restrictions on grocery store visits, prompting consumers to adapt their shopping and dining habits. Studies on purchasing habits during the early months of the pandemic found an increase in grocery store delivery options over in-person shopping, as well as an increase in support for local food producers (Sheth, 2020; Bellarmino et al., 2020). Additionally, those facing increased food insecurity became more likely to utilize coping strategies such as stocking up on non-perishables and buying cheaper items (Niles et al., 2020). However, one of the most noticeable changes in American food habits was the increasing popularity of cooking and the home-production of food. From cooking, to baking, to gardening, individuals and families alike were developing their interests and skills in the realm of food production without leaving their homes (Wilkins, 2020; Easterbrook-Smith, 2020; Bellarmino et al., 2020; Goldman, 2020).

Baking, in particular, became a visibly popular quarantine activity. Young adults began to see more baking-related content on social media platforms while grocery stores started experiencing yeast shortages as a result of an uptick in yeasted-bread baking (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020). Some scholars joined in on the baking trend, describing their own endeavors with “isolation loaves” and “quarantine cookies,” or making cakes from scratch for birthday celebrations (Marvar, 2020; Imber-Black, 2020; Fox, 2020). Others began diving into the rationale behind the possible trend, quantifying the increase in production of homemade goods and investigating possible motivations for the hobby (Renzo et al., 2020). Given the short timeline between the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the writing of this paper, limited findings exist regarding baking during quarantine. The most common findings address baking as an enjoyable pastime that could distract from the monotony of life during lockdown (Marvar, 2020; Bellur, 2020; Imber-Black, 2020). Baking was also found to provide comfort and stress-relief through its tactile nature, and acted as a way to show love towards others during a time that restricted many social interactions (Marvar, 2020; Bellur, 2020; Renzo et al., 2020). While these studies and reflections focused primarily on baking during quarantine, the motivators in question can be tied to baking outside of the context of COVID-19.

Baking to Cope.

Baking has been found to be a coping mechanism in three primary ways: as an alleviator of food insecurity, a practicable stress-reliever, and by producing comfort foods. For individuals and families who face food insecurity, baking may be experienced less as a leisure activity and more as a means for provision, especially in the case of bread (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020; Lupton, 1996). Initially a common household practice, baking with simple, affordable ingredients has

become a form of creative expression and indulgence for people living in the privileged Western world (Lupton 1996). These bakers do not experience the need to make bread for provisions, using it instead as leisure activity which provides an excess of food. However, many food-insecure households in the United States have continued to rely on baking bread and cooking with accessible ingredients in order to provide for themselves and their families, both prior to and during the pandemic (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020). Though, being food-secure does not necessarily exclude individuals from using baking as a coping mechanism.

Beyond providing necessary provisions, baking often provides goods that are regarded as “comfort foods.” Comfort foods are foods that are psychologically tied to comfort and pleasure, specifically with regard to memories of one’s past and childhood (Locher et al., 2006; Kandiah et al., 2006; Spence, 2017; Bowen et al., 2020). Baked goods, in particular, are common comfort foods as they evoke memories of homemade recipes and the associated aromas which fill a kitchen during the baking process. Thus, by recreating these comfort foods, bakers are able to access these feelings of nostalgia and comfort within their own kitchens. A study on college-aged students also found that younger people tend to prefer snack-related comfort foods over meal-related comfort foods, and that women are more likely than men to opt for sweet foods (Kandiah et al., 2006). This is especially interesting to note because of the study’s focus on the baking habits of college students.

Particularly salient to the practice of baking during quarantine is the use of baking as a stress reliever. Due to the time-consuming nature of baking, especially goods that involve yeast and require time to rise, it can provide necessary structure to the day (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020; Haley & McKay 2004). This proves to be valuable during stressful periods of time in which a routine becomes difficult to establish, such as time spent in rehabilitation or during an extended

lockdown. The methodic nature of following a baking recipe has also been found to help reduce stress due to the sense of control felt by a baker who is able to dictate the beginning and end of their process and develop a routine (Marvar, 2020; Braus & Morton, 2020). While this aspect of baking has been particularly noted within the context of COVID-19, it has been recognized as valuable stress-relief even prior to quarantine. Baking is often used by healthcare professionals as a low-stakes, engaging activity, and has even been used as a valuable form of occupational or art therapy treatment (Marvar, 2020; Haley & McKay, 2004; Braus & Morton, 2020). The ability to exert control over one's surroundings, as is the case with baking, allows individuals experiencing high levels of stress to recenter themselves and direct their attention towards a small, achievable goal.

Baking to Connect.

Baking and baked goods also serve significant social functions. The act of cooking for others is regarded as a “labor of love,” often associated with the responsibility of feeding and nurturing held by mothers and wives (Lupton, 1996). While this gendered aspect of meal provision is changing, baking, in particular, is still widely regarded as a feminine activity (Hollingsworth & Tyyska, 1988; Lupton, 1996). It also remains true that cooking for others, especially family members, is a valued way of showing care towards others in the sense of supplying homemade provisions. Instead of cooking in return for payment, as is the case for restaurant staff and other food service workers, cooking in the home can be regarded as a labor of commitment and a social performance (Lupton, 1996; Daniels et al., 2012). One study found that cooking with or for others is felt to be more enjoyable than cooking by and for oneself,

suggesting that baking or cooking as a social activity is considered to be more leisure in nature than the duty of providing food for oneself (Daniels et al., 2012).

Social scientists have also taken a Maussian approach to the products of baking and cooking. Mauss' studies of gift-exchange reveal that exchange systems are vital in creating and maintaining social ties between communities and individuals (2002). When the products of baking are used as a gift, social relationships between the baker and the consumer are strengthened. However, the same is not true in the exchanging of baked goods for money, as the introduction of capital exchange removes the baker's personal ties to the good being given (Lupton, 1996; Mauss, 2002). Additionally, when these gifted goods are specific to a tradition or culture, they can function as a way of defining a group or strengthening a connected web of individuals (Lupton, 1996; Mauss, 2002; Lawson, 2018). Further, in Western societies where gifts are primarily considered to be something that should be given for free, the unreciprocated labor put into baking a gift produces a feeling of generosity on the part of the baker (Mauss, 2002; Lawson, 2018). This act is also successful in indicating to the recipient that the baker is willing to sacrifice the time and care required to provide them with the gift of sustenance.

Baking to Create.

It is also important to consider the nature of baking as a form of production. Industrialization has seen the transfer of production from the hands of individuals to nonhuman machinery. Baking, in particular, has shifted from a home-situated task which required the use of a family's own tools and ingredients, to commercial bakeries which utilize donut-producing conveyor belts (Carrier, 1992). Not only has baking become a form of impersonal labor, the function of baked goods has been transformed from necessary provisions to products that are

sold. Bakers are no longer the primary consumers of their goods, and by selling the products of their labor they lose ownership over the excess that is created. The exchange of baked goods for money indicates that baked goods have become a commodity. This commodification, in addition to the impersonal nature of commercial baking, has led to the alienation of baked goods. The Marxian concept of alienation involves the separation of workers from the products of their labor, which is the case for commercial bakers today who no longer engage exclusively with household production nor have sole, personal ownership over their products (Marx, 1978; Carrier, 1992; Leopold, 2018). Alienation has also played a role in removing production from the context of social relations (Carrier, 1992). As discussed above, exchanging baked goods for money does not allow for the strengthening of social ties that is associated with gift-giving. Thus, the bonds that previously existed between the members involved in production or parties to whom goods were freely given are no longer built and maintained. However, there are ways in which alienation can be combated. Chatterton and Pusey discuss “socially useful doing,” or the doing of labor that is purposeful and not determined by others (2019). As in, engaging in work which is socially meaningful and that is not dictated by or done for others. This allows for the products of labor to remain in the hands of the producer and maintains the personal connections that can exist between producer and product. Further, this ownership of and connection to a product allows the producer to feel connected to their labor. In the case of baking, baking as a leisure activity produces goods that one can consume and take pride in. The usefulness of the products of baking and their successful creation can provide a baker with a feeling of accomplishment (Easterbrook-Smith, 2020). This is similar to the stress-relieving aspect of placing control in the hands of a baker, in that baking allows for individuals to gain

confidence in their ability to learn a new skill and create a finished product (Haley & McKay, 2004; Easterbrook-Smith, 2020).

Data and Methods

This study focuses on the baking perspectives and experiences of students at a small, liberal arts college located in the Midwest. While this site was primarily chosen because it is the researcher's home institution, it lends itself to the research topic due to its population of Millennials and Generation Z and diverse student body. The student body is composed of 19% international students and over 65% out-of-state students, allowing for a wide geographical representation of college-aged students (18-26). Additionally, due to the small student population, the researcher was able to encourage, and make available, participation in the study to almost all enrolled students. However, the researcher notes that the results of this study cannot be generalized to all United States residents aged 18-26 due to the focus on students attending a prestigious university and receiving a liberal arts education. This study was approved by IRB on October 22, 2020.

Survey Collection.

Data collection began in Fall 2020 with a survey that was made available to all 2,300 students at the college. This survey collected respondent demographics including gender, sexuality, age, race, department of study, and indicators of socioeconomic class including the ownership status of family homes during high school and experienced economic or financial hardships during the previous 12 months. Respondents were asked about their childhood baking experiences such as the prevalence of family members or friends baking during this period and

their participation in these activities. Respondents were also asked about their baking and cooking experiences during the COVID-19 quarantine period (March 2020 - August 2020) and the preceding summer (May 2019 - August 2019). Data was collected on respondents' living arrangements during both time periods and the types of baking and cooking being done.

Questions addressed kitchen access during each of these times and frequency of doing each of: cooking meals for the self and/or others, eating takeout for a meal, baking yeasted breads, baking quick breads (e.g. banana bread), and baking sweets (e.g. cookies, cakes). This provided insight into who, amongst the respondents, was baking or cooking and what they were choosing to make. A total of 183 survey responses were collected. Of these responses, 139 respondents reported having access to a kitchen during both the 2020 quarantine and Summer 2019 and were thus included in data analysis using SPSS. Cross-tabulation tables and chi-square tests were used to analyze who was baking and what was being baked, due to nearly all variables being nominal or ordinal.

Focus Groups.

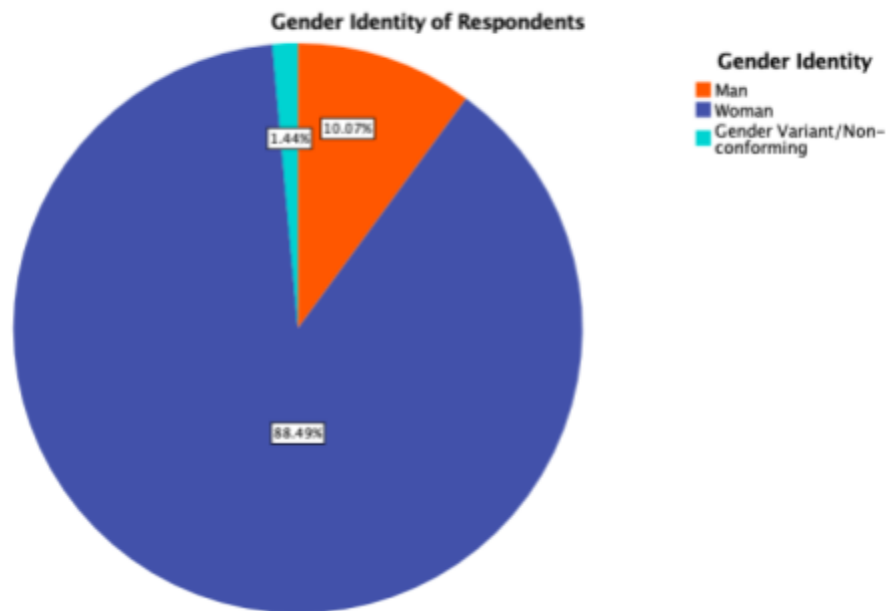
To understand why students were cooking or baking and how these activities functioned within the context of quarantine, four focus groups were conducted with a total of 14 participants. These participants were selected based on their survey responses in which they indicated interest in focus group participation. The groups were divided based on the frequency and types of baking done by each participant, which were determined using survey data and the researcher's discretion. Ultimately these groups were divided into frequent yeast bakers (Focus Group 1), frequent sweets bakers (Focus Group 2), frequent bakers and cooks (Focus Group 3), and somewhat frequent bakers (Focus Group 4). All participants identified as women. Each

group was asked to reflect on and share about their baking and cooking experiences during childhood as well as before and during the COVID-19 quarantine period. Questions addressed participants' living arrangements during quarantine, other activities that occupied their time, personal experiences and motivations for baking, and whether or not they viewed baking as a coping mechanism. This allowed for more understanding of each individual's motivations for baking as well as how they felt their baking habits fit into their quarantine experience. The use of focus groups also allowed for participants to engage in discussion with other bakers and cooks, thus generating new ideas on the research topic and encouraging students to compare and contrast their experiences with their peers'. The dialogues from these focus groups were then transcribed and coded for themes of coping, connecting, and creating, as well as discussion of childhood, types of goods being baked, and mentions of social media.

Results

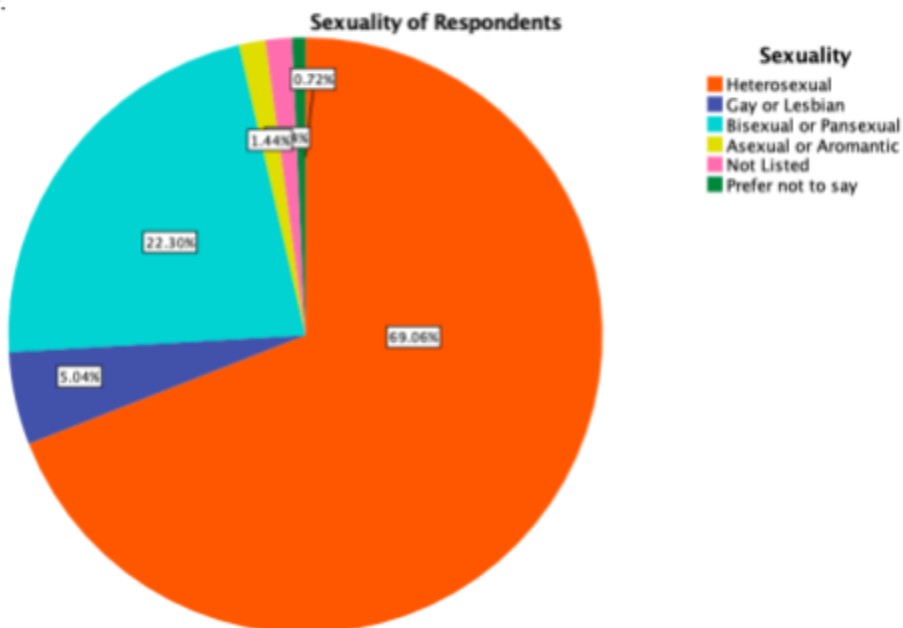
The survey received 183 responses, of which 139 were completed by respondents who reported having access to a kitchen during both the 2020 quarantine period and the summer of 2019. These responses were included in data analysis due to the study's focus on baking habits, which could only consistently take place with kitchen access. Figures 1-7 depict the various demographic measures reported by respondents. In this sample, the majority (88.49%) of respondents self-identified as women (Figure 1). The researcher notes that due to this imbalance, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of the college, which has an enrollment of roughly 51% women and 49% men.

Figure 1.



Survey respondents were also asked to self-identify their sexuality. While the majority (69.06%) of respondents self-identified as heterosexual, nearly a quarter (22.3%) identified as bisexual or pansexual (Figure 2). It is unclear if this is representative of the college due to a lack of data on students sexuality reported by the institution.

Figure 2.



Figures 3 and 4 show the reported frequencies of respondents' race and ethnicity. With 104 students self-reporting as "white" and 123 self-reporting as "not Hispanic or Latinx," this is reasonably representative of the predominantly white student population at the college.

Figure 3.

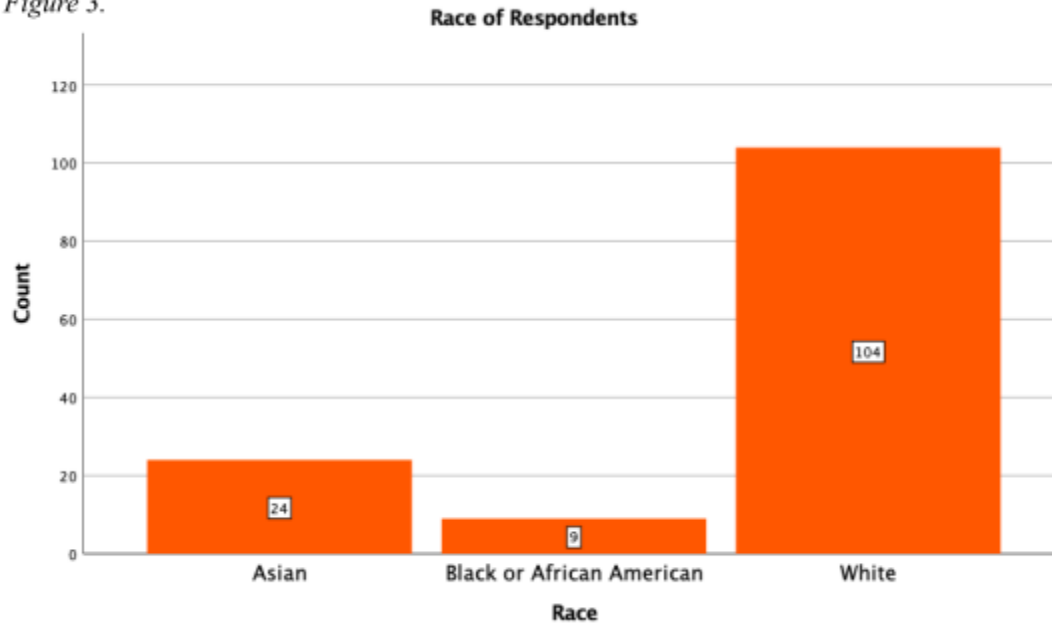
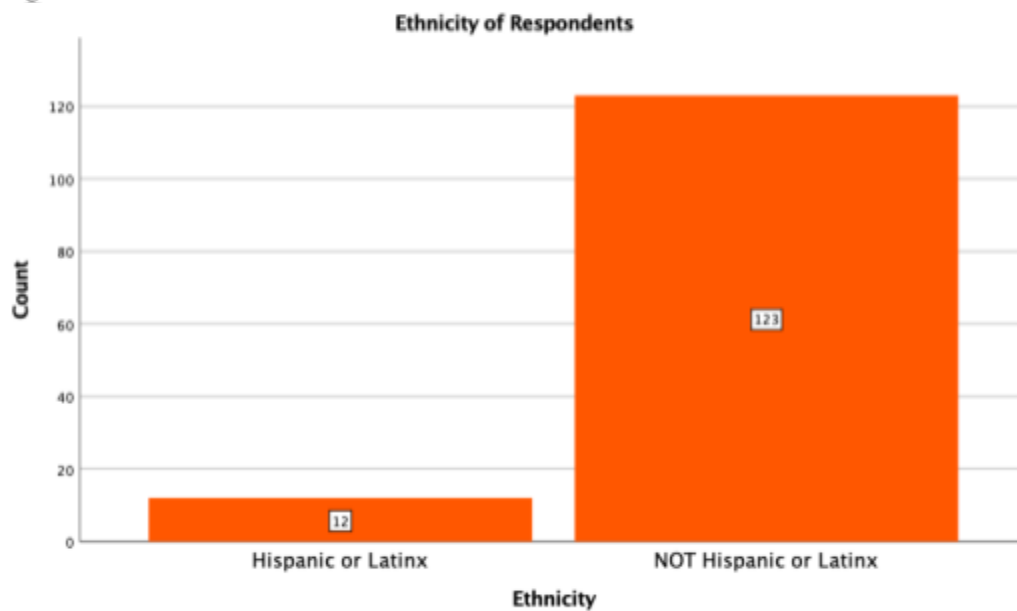
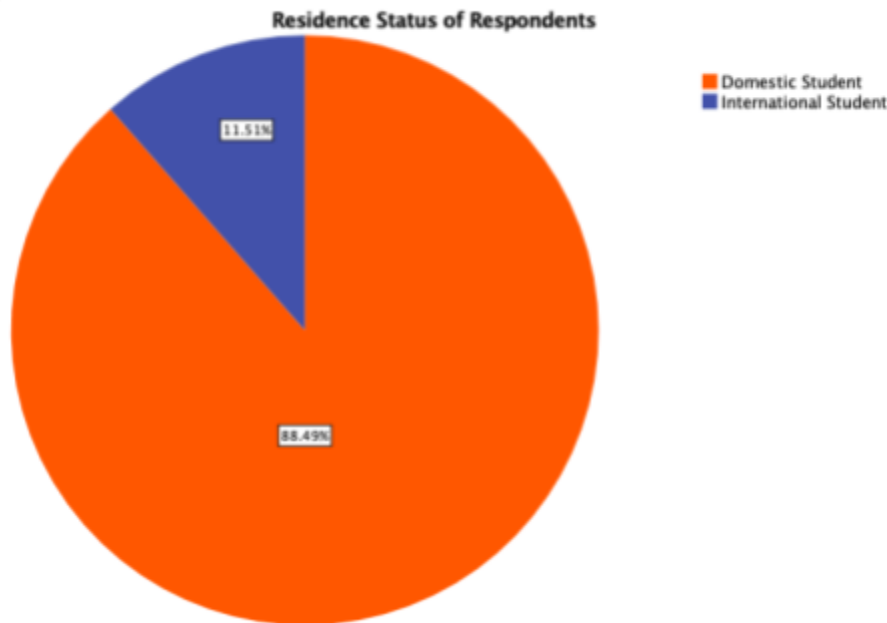


Figure 4.



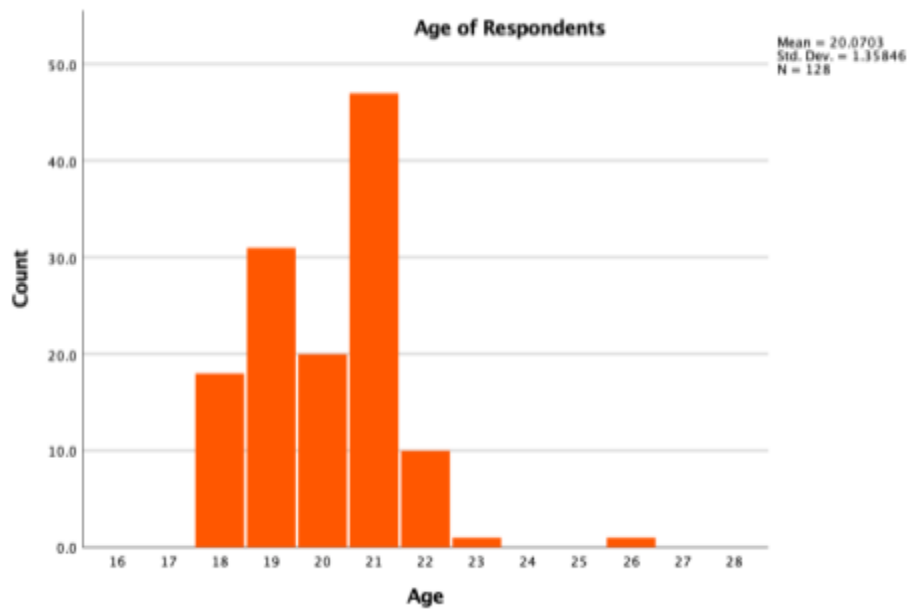
Survey respondents were also asked to report their status as a domestic or international student (Figure 5). Of the respondents, 11.51% reported being international students, which is slightly less than the college's report of 19% international students.

Figure 5.



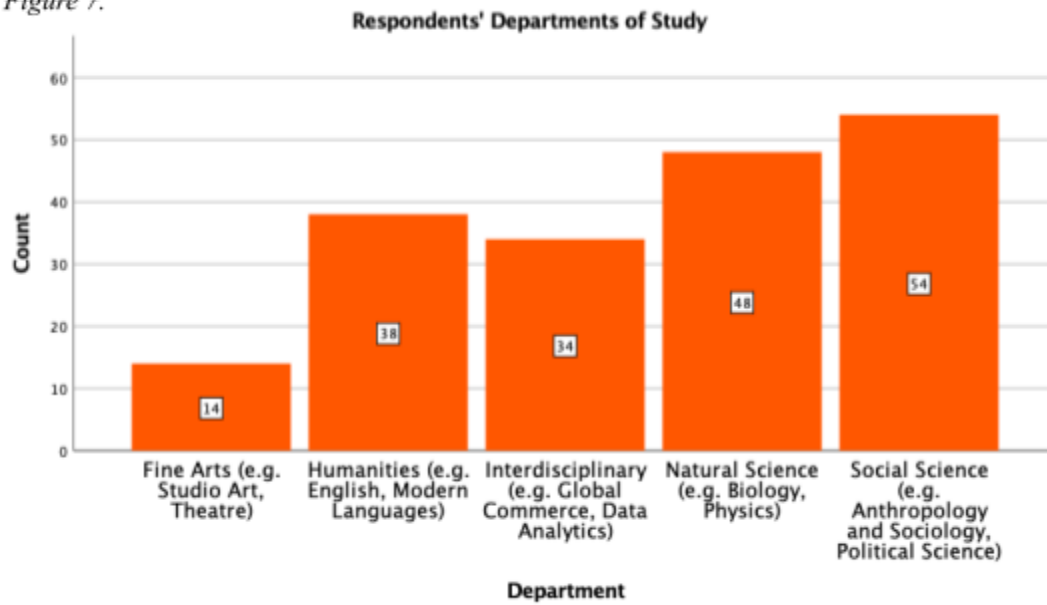
The reported age of respondents, as shown in Figure 6, reflected the researcher's expectations. Survey respondents were required to be 18 years of age or older, and due to the exclusively undergraduate student population, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of students are under the age of 24. In this sample the mean age was 20 and only one respondent reported being older than 24.

Figure 6.



Finally, Figure 7 shows the respondents' primary departments of study. A range of departments were reported and 33.81% of respondents reported multiple primary areas. This was expected due to the nature of the college as a liberal arts institution which encourages students to pursue multiple majors or minors in different fields.

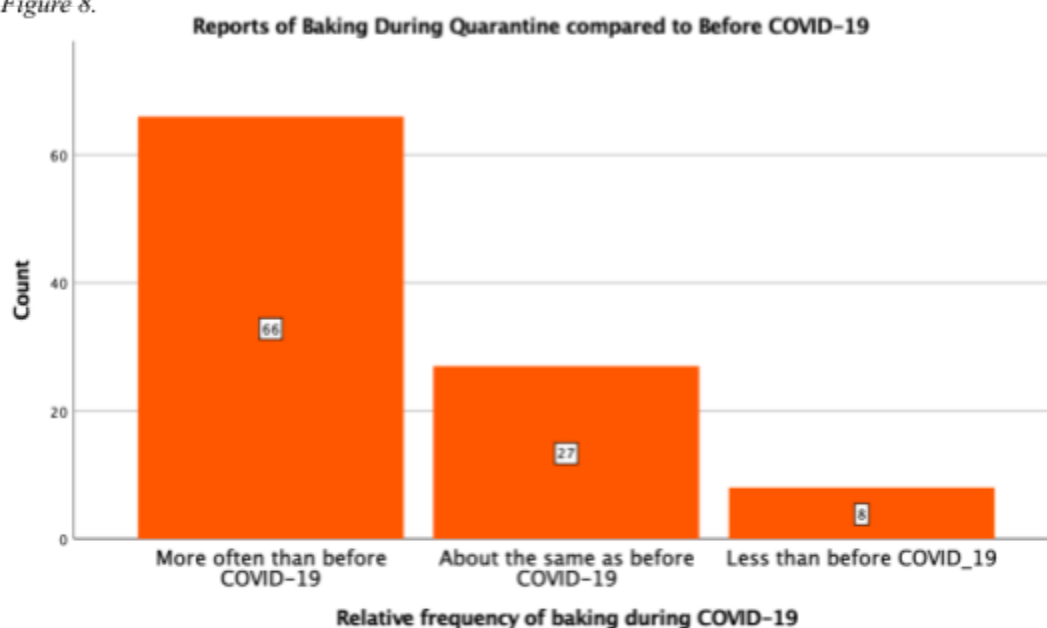
Figure 7.



Who was baking?

Before examining who may have joined the trend of quarantine baking, it is necessary to determine if such a trend actually existed. While the scope of this study does not include analyzing the baking habits of the world population, it is possible to determine whether or not there was an increasing trend amongst the participants of the study. Figure 8 depicts the responses to a question asking respondents to compare how often they baked during the COVID-19 quarantine period to how often they baked during Summer 2019. It can be seen that the majority (65.3%) of respondents reported baking “more often than before COVID-19,” which is consistent with the researcher’s initial observations of an uptick in baking.

Figure 8.



Survey respondents were deemed to be bakers if they reported baking yeasted breads, quick breads, or sweets twice a month or more. This categorization was used to determine if respondents were bakers both before and during quarantine. The researcher would like to note that the relationship between baking during quarantine and age were not tested in data analysis. This was due to the small range of respondent ages (18-26).

Tables 1 and 2 contain the cross-tabulation data and associated Chi-Square test for baking before quarantine and baking during quarantine. This data reveals that respondents were significantly more likely to be baking during quarantine if they had baked during Summer 2019 ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1.

Baked during quarantine * Baked before quarantine Crosstabulation

			Baked before quarantine		Total
			YES	NO	
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	61	41	102
		% within Baked before quarantine	93.8%	55.4%	73.4%
	NO	Count	4	33	37
		% within Baked before quarantine	6.2%	44.6%	26.6%
Total	Count		65	74	139
	% within Baked before quarantine		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.178 ^a	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	24.247	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	29.309	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	25.990	1	<.001		
N of Valid Cases	139				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.30.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Tables 3 and 4 show that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender identity and baking during quarantine ($p = 0.018$). Among our respondents, women were found to be more likely to be quarantine bakers than men (76.4% vs. 42.9%). Further, 100% of respondents who identified as “Gender Variant/Non-conforming” were quarantine bakers. While this value

remains statistically significant, it is not regarded as substantively significant due to the small population ($n=2$) of respondents in this category.

Table 3.

Baked during quarantine * Gender Identity Crosstabulation

			Gender Identity			Total
			Man	Woman	Gender Variant/Non-conforming	
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	6	94	2	102
		% within Gender Identity	42.9%	76.4%	100.0%	73.4%
	NO	Count	8	29	0	37
		% within Gender Identity	57.1%	23.6%	0.0%	26.6%
Total	Count		14	123	2	139
	% within Gender Identity		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.986 ^a	2	.018
Likelihood Ratio	7.605	2	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.845	1	.005
N of Valid Cases	139		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .53.

Amongst all possible responses for self-reported sexuality, at least 50% were baking during quarantine (Table 5). While respondents who selected “Not Listed” were the least likely to be quarantine bakers (50%) and those who selected “Asexual or Aromantic” or “Prefer not to say” were the most likely (100%), these differences were not statistically significant ($p=0.728$, Table 6). This was due to the small sample size for each of these options ($n \leq 2$). Thus, there exists little evidence that the likelihood of baking during quarantine is related to sexuality.

Table 5.

Baked during quarantine * Sexuality Crosstabulation									
			Sexuality						
			Heterosexual	Gay or Lesbian	Bisexual or Pansexual	Asexual or Aromantic	Not Listed (optional fill-in)	Prefer not to say	Total
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	68	5	25	2	1	1	102
		% within Sexuality	70.8%	71.4%	80.6%	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%	73.4%
	NO	Count	28	2	6	0	1	0	37
		% within Sexuality	29.2%	28.6%	19.4%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	26.6%
Total		Count	96	7	31	2	2	1	139
		% within Sexuality	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.818 ^a	5	.728
Likelihood Ratio	3.572	5	.612
Linear-by-Linear Association	.995	1	.318
N of Valid Cases	139		

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.

Similarly, more than 60% of each race reported in the survey was baking during quarantine (Table 7). Although respondents who identified as white were slightly more likely to be quarantine bakers (76.9%), this was not statistically significant ($p=0.310$).

Table 7.

Baked during quarantine * Race Crosstabulation						
			Race			
			Asian	Black or African American	White	Total
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	15	6	80	101
		% within Race	62.5%	66.7%	76.9%	73.7%
	NO	Count	9	3	24	36
		% within Race	37.5%	33.3%	23.1%	26.3%
Total		Count	24	9	104	137
		% within Race	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 8.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.342 ^a	2	.310
Likelihood Ratio	2.232	2	.328
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.323	1	.127
N of Valid Cases	137		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.36.

Tables 9 and 10 contain the cross-tabulation data and associated Chi-Square test for residence status (domestic or international) and baking during quarantine. Domestic students were found to be more likely to be quarantine bakers than international students (76.4% vs. 50.0%), a difference that was statistically significant ($p=0.024$).

Table 9.

Baked during quarantine * Domestic or International Crosstabulation

			Domestic or International		Total
			Domestic Student	International Student	
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	94	8	102
		% within Domestic or International	76.4%	50.0%	73.4%
	NO	Count	29	8	37
		% within Domestic or International	23.6%	50.0%	26.6%
Total	Count		123	16	139
	% within Domestic or International		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 10.

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.061 ^a	1	.024		
Continuity Correction ^b	3.798	1	.051		
Likelihood Ratio	4.546	1	.033		
Fisher's Exact Test				.035	.030
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.024	1	.025		
N of Valid Cases	139				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.26.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

In Table 11 it can be seen that for all departments of study, at least 70% of respondents were baking during quarantine. Chi-Square tests were conducted for each department and found no statistical significance, suggesting that area of study had little effect on respondents' baking habits.

Table 11.

Baked during quarantine * Primary Department Crosstabulation								
			Department of study ^a					
			Fine Arts	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences	Humanitites	Interdisciplinary	Total
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	12	43	36	27	24	100
		% within \$DEPARTMENT	85.7%	79.6%	75.0%	71.1%	70.6%	
	NO	Count	2	11	12	11	10	37
		% within \$DEPARTMENT	14.3%	20.4%	25.0%	28.9%	29.4%	
Total		Count	14	54	48	38	34	137

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Socioeconomic class was determined using a composite of measures: ownership status of a respondent's home during high school, and whether a respondent went without enough food, medication, good shelter, a previously received cash income, or had difficulty paying utility bills during the past 12 months. In Table 12, note that for all socioeconomic classes, at least 60% of respondents were quarantine bakers. While members of the upper-class were slightly more likely to be quarantine bakers (75.6%), this was not statistically significant ($p=0.343$, Table 13).

Thus, there does not exist evidence that suggests a correlation between socioeconomic status and baking during quarantine.

Table 12.

Baked during quarantine * Socioeconomic class Crosstabulation						
			Socioeconomic class			
			Upper-class	Middle-class	Lower-class	Total
Baked during quarantine	YES	Count	90	9	3	102
		% within Socioeconomic class	75.6%	60.0%	60.0%	73.4%
	NO	Count	29	6	2	37
		% within Socioeconomic class	24.4%	40.0%	40.0%	26.6%
Total		Count	119	15	5	139
		% within Socioeconomic class	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 13.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.142 ^a	2	.343
Likelihood Ratio	1.998	2	.368
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.865	1	.172
N of Valid Cases	139		

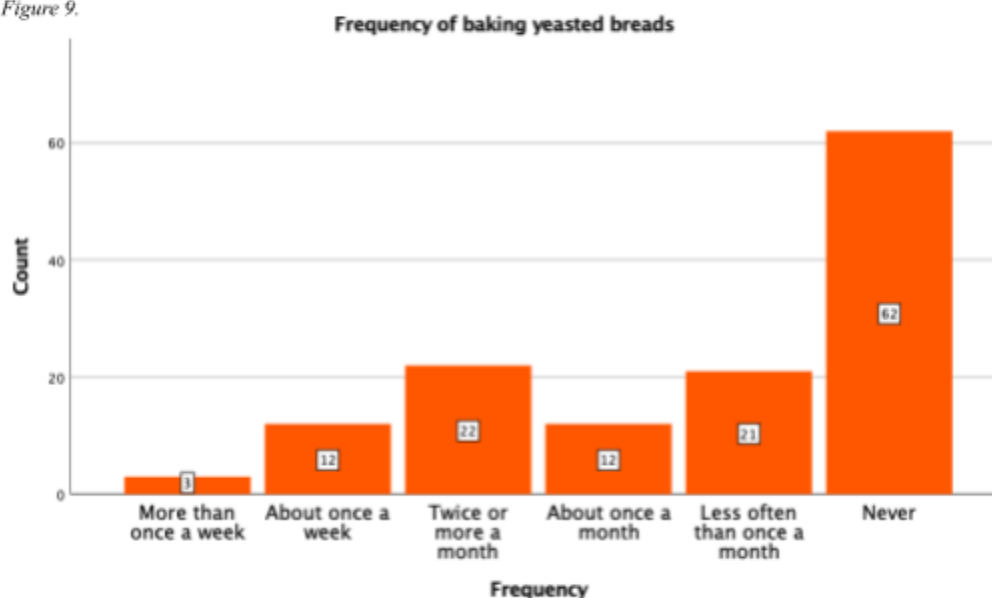
a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.33.

What were people baking?

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they baked each of yeasted breads, quick breads (e.g. banana bread), and sweets (e.g. cookies, cakes) during quarantine and Summer 2019. Figures 9-11 display the frequencies reported for the 2020 quarantine with a sample size of n=132. In determining frequently baked items, the researcher used the same threshold that qualified a respondent as a quarantine baker: twice a month or

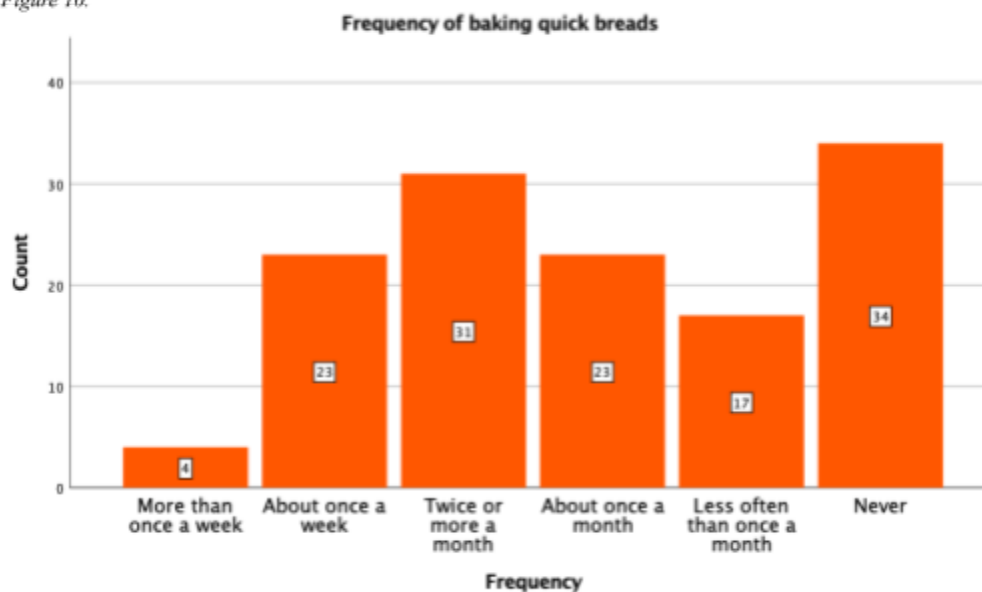
more. Additionally, focus group participants discussed a number of goods that they made as part of their baking endeavors, falling under each of these categories. Specific baked goods were mentioned a total of 32 times.

Figure 9.



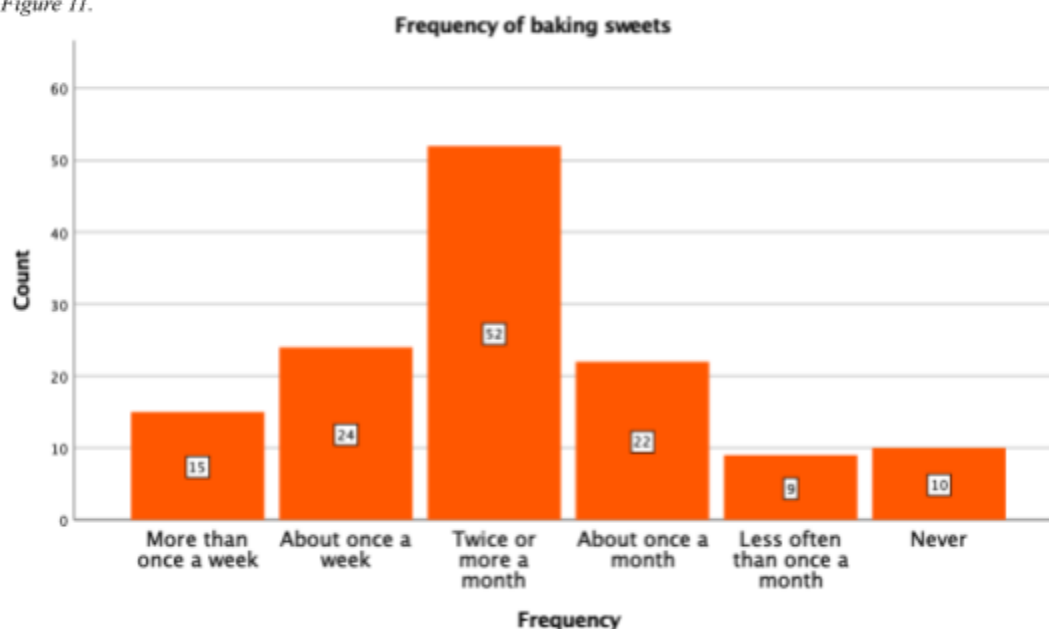
Yeasted goods were frequently baked by 37 respondents (28%, Figure 9). Similarly, focus group participants mentioned 9 types (28.1%) of yeasted goods including bread, rolls, and pizza dough.

Figure 10.



Quick breads were frequently baked by 58 respondents (43.9%, Figure 10), however only 6 focus group participants (18.8%) mentioned baking quick breads. This included banana, zucchini, and pumpkin breads.

Figure 11.



Sweets were frequently baked by 91 respondents (68.9%, Figure 11). Sweets also held the majority in focus groups with 17 mentions (53.1%) including cookies, cakes, brownies, scones, and strawberry shortcake. Due to the wide range of baked goods that are included in the “sweets” category, it is not unexpected that these were the most frequently reported goods being baked. Similarly, sweets were reported to be the most frequently baked goods (44.7%, Table 14) during Summer 2019, followed by quick breads (24.2%, Table 15) and yeasted breads (11.5%, Table 16). Note that each category of baked goods was being made more frequently during quarantine when compared to Summer 2019, which is consistent with the overall rise in baking habits reported by respondents.

Table 14.

Frequency of baking yeasted breads in Summer 2019

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More than once a week	2	1.4	1.5	1.5
	About once a week	5	3.6	3.8	5.3
	Twice or more a month	8	5.8	6.1	11.5
	About once a month	16	11.5	12.2	23.7
	Less often than once a month	17	12.2	13.0	36.6
	Never	83	59.7	63.4	100.0
	Total	131	94.2	100.0	
Missing	System	8	5.8		
Total		139	100.0		

Table 15.

Frequency of baking quick breads in Summer 2019

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More than once a week	4	2.9	3.0	3.0
	About once a week	8	5.8	6.1	9.1
	Twice or more a month	20	14.4	15.2	24.2
	About once a month	18	12.9	13.6	37.9
	Less often than once a month	22	15.8	16.7	54.5
	Never	60	43.2	45.5	100.0
	Total	132	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	7	5.0		
Total		139	100.0		

Table 16.

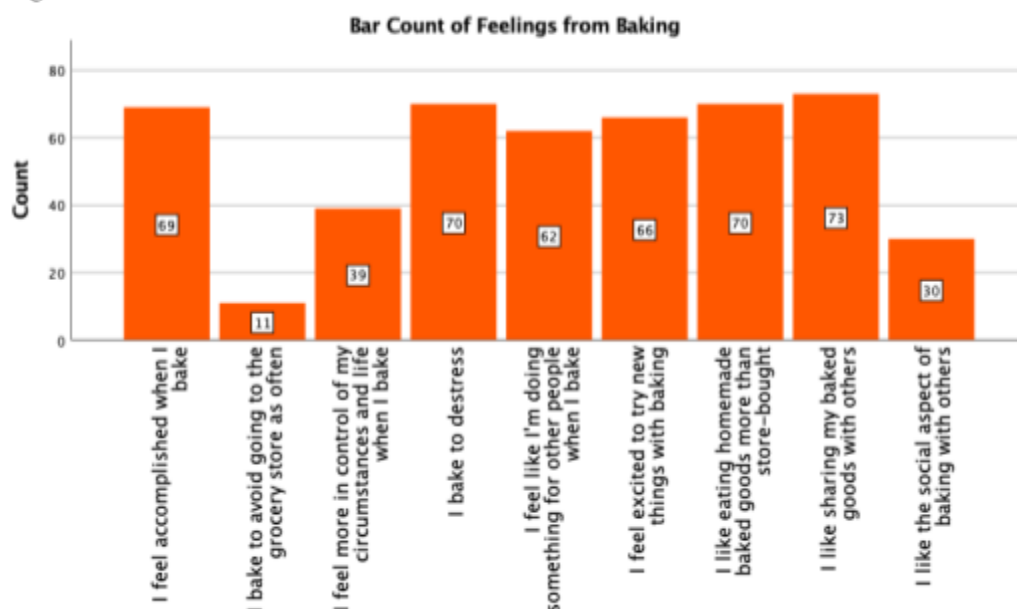
Frequency of baking sweets in Summer 2019

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More than once a week	9	6.5	6.8	6.8
	About once a week	14	10.1	10.6	17.4
	Twice or more a month	36	25.9	27.3	44.7
	About once a month	29	20.9	22.0	66.7
	Less often than once a month	15	10.8	11.4	78.0
	Never	29	20.9	22.0	100.0
	Total	132	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	7	5.0		
Total		139	100.0		

Why were people baking?

Some insight into the motivations behind respondents' baking habits can be gained from the survey data. Figure 12 shows the results of a question asking respondents to select all statements that were true with regard to possible motivations and sentiments associated with baking.

Figure 12.



It can be seen that the most frequently reported responses were “I feel accomplished when I bake,” “I bake to distress,” “I like eating homemade baked goods more than store-bought,” and “I like sharing my baked goods with others.” Other common feelings were “I feel like I’m doing something for other people when I bake” and “I feel excited to try new things with baking.” This variety in responses suggests that there is no singular motivation for baking. Not only do different people choose to bake for different reasons, one individual may also bake with several motivations and sentiments in mind. Greater understanding of this multiplicity was gained in conversations with the focus group participants, who revealed a number of motivations for baking during quarantine including the uses of baking as a coping mechanism and as a way to

connect with others. Another theme that arose was that of the influence of social media on baking habits. Baking was also discussed as a way of producing something that resulted in feeling both accomplished and like a household contributor. Each of these themes is discussed below.

Coping.

Baking and cooking as a coping mechanism took several forms, ranging from a distraction from boredom to a task that became necessary to feed oneself. Megan, a senior student from the Midwest, found herself baking lots of cookies and cooking with her mother during quarantine. When asked about her thoughts on why there may have been an uptick in baking during this time she shared:

“There was nothing else to do. So, I think that was something; that it takes, you know, quite a long time and there's, you know, you have to follow instructions and you have to, you know, you have to do something instead of, you know, sitting around and watching TV for the rest of the day.”

(Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

This idea, of using baking as a way to occupy excess time, arose frequently in focus group discussions. For several students, their summers spent in quarantine were far less busy than their typical summers which would be occupied by summer employment, vacationing with family, and spending time with friends (Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021; Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021; Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021). As these activities became more difficult due to COVID-19, participants found themselves with abundant free time at home. Thus, baking became a way to cope with the boredom that accompanied life in lockdown.

Megan viewed this as a primary reason for baking more frequently in quarantine, as it was both her own experience and one that she observed with her friends. Participants also discussed that baking out of boredom allowed people to become more adventurous with their baking and try out more time-consuming recipes (Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021). In some cases, these were recipes that participants had been wanting to try for some time that they finally attempted since they no longer were barred by time-constraints (Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021).

For others, baking was used as a method to cope with stress. Leah, a senior from the Midwest, spent time baking with her older sister while in lockdown at home and shared:

“For me it was just, it was really relaxing. Like I'm not very good at sitting and doing nothing, like I'm definitely a busy-body. So, it was a way to like, relax and unwind without just like, just sitting around.”

(Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021)

Similarly, Beth, another senior from the Midwest, occupied herself with baking sweets, and stated:

“I baked a ton. Baking is normally something I do, it helps me destress and so obviously [quarantine is] a very stressful time, and it was like a way for me to feel, like, some control over my environment. And then I love sweets so it's a win-win.”

(Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021)

While many participants were like Leah, who discovered baking as a method of stress-relief during quarantine, there were a few students who, like Beth, were familiar with the concept of “stress baking.” For these participants, stress baking has been a tactic used through high school and college that provides distraction from various stressors. As Beth mentioned, the initial

quarantine period was an exceptionally stressful time frame filled with unfamiliar circumstances. Thus, the practice of baking to cope with stress became fitting in that it both filled unoccupied time and distracted bakers, both new and experienced, from the surrounding uncertainty. Further, one student cited the repetitive and predictable nature of baking as being a way to gain a sense of control over their environment during an otherwise unpredictable time (Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021). Students experienced a loss of control over their daily routines when they were sent home from college and asked to follow quarantine guidelines, so finding an activity in which control could be regained provided relief from the stress of shifting lifestyles.

Additionally, Beth mentioned the positive aspect of having sweet foods after baking. Not only was the process of baking comforting for her, but the final products were as well. For several participants, baked goods evoked memories of childhood and the presence of comforting foods and aromas in their homes (Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021). As discussed earlier, comfort foods are commonly tied with positive memories experienced during childhood. Additionally, for college women, sweet snacks are found to be the most frequently selected comfort food (Locher et al., 2006; Kandiah et al., 2006; Spence, 2017; Bowen et al., 2020). Thus, the act of baking, which releases familiar aromas, and the enjoyment of the resulting baked goods, as experienced by several participants, is consistent with existing research on comfort foods.

Less common in the sample of students who participated in focus groups were individuals who needed to use baking or cooking as a way to cope with the inaccessibility of food. Only one participant, Tori, mentioned a need to cook for provisions. When asked why she cooked and baked, she responded:

“All my siblings went home because of COVID, and I have six siblings and a single mom. So she had to pick up more hours at work and we would have to cook on her late shift, so it just kind of happened.”

(Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

For Tori, a sophomore from the Great Plains region, cooking was not exclusively a leisure activity. While cooking and baking were sometimes used as distractions or ways to escape from boredom, Tori and her siblings also experienced a need to cook more in order to supply themselves with meals. For students accustomed to eating all of their meals in dining halls or being fed by parents, changes in living arrangements and parents' employment led to a new independence in the realm of provisions (Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021). Though not necessarily a coping mechanism for food insecurity, this need to provide oneself with meals required students, such as Tori, to begin cooking more frequently.

Connecting.

For many college students, returning home for quarantine was a significant shift with regard to living arrangements and social life. While at school, students lead independent lives that involve socializing with friends and roommates on a daily basis, and less time is spent with family members. Additionally, college is a critical time for personal growth and development, where students are discovering and establishing personal identities, interests, and routines (Hamilton & Armstrong 2013). Thus, for students in their third or fourth year of college, like Leah, returning home involved a large shift in day-to-day life. In March of 2019 Leah found herself no longer surrounded by her friends at school, busy with coursework and extracurricular activities, but under the roof of her parents' home. Especially different was the sudden increase

in time spent with her older sister, with whom she did not share many hobbies but who was one of the few people she could consistently interact with throughout her quarantine.

“[Baking] was also like, something that my sister and I really liked doing together. And especially because like, we haven't been like, in the same place at the same time for, like, a long time in a row in many years. So, it was nice for us to like, have something to do since, like, a lot of the stuff that we're, like, into or interested in isn't the same. But we both like, love cooking and we love baking so it was something that we could do together.”

(Leah, Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021)

For Leah, baking with her sister functioned as a social activity. This social aspect was twofold. First, Leah was able to experience the increased enjoyment of baking with someone else, rather than by herself, as discussed by Daniels et. al. (2012). Second, baking proved to be an activity that both Leah and her sister were interested in, thus allowing them to bond over the shared act of baking.

For two participants, Jenny (a senior from the West Coast) and Beth, baking was an activity that they could do together even from afar. These friends were abruptly separated when they returned to their homes located across the country from one another. As students who would normally spend time together on campus, baking together virtually became a way to spend time with each other and work towards a common goal. Jenny and Beth shared:

“Something that me and one of my friends did is we actually did Zoom baking together. So like once every couple weeks we would go on Zoom together and do a little baking, have the same recipe, and [Beth] tried out some of my favorites and like, I tried some of

her family's, like, classic recipes. We also did some, like, searching and finding some new recipes to try. So it was definitely a way of connecting with her."

(Jenny, Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

"Something I did which was really fun, I would bake things over FaceTime with [Jenny], so, like, we'd both make the same thing and then, like at our separate places, and then enjoy them together."

(Beth, Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021)

Like Leah, Jenny and Beth used baking as a social activity. However, by baking via Zoom, the two friends were able to reproduce a social interaction virtually, which proved to be a valuable experience during their time apart. The act of sharing family recipes, as well as tackling new recipes together, served as a way to strengthen social ties by incorporating family traditions (Mauss, 2002). Social ties like these were especially important during the high-stress, and often isolating, initial quarantine period. So for Jenny and Beth, being able to connect and spend time with each other helped both women to cope with the undesirable circumstances (Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021).

Several participants also discussed using the products of their baking as a way of connecting with others. For Jenny, visiting friends at home had to take place within a different context from previous years. Going to restaurants or spending time in each others' homes was not an option when social distancing was being strictly enforced.

"I like, have friends that I would always take my baked goods to and we would like, stand outside and talk and it would be like the- really the first time we had talked in a long time. And these are normally friends that coming back home I would see like, you

know, every other day, so it's definitely something that I did for them as well. But also for me, too, like I- it was selfishly so that I could see them and talk to them.”

(Jenny, Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

In a similar vein, Jess found joy in sending baked goods to a friend that lived far away who she knew was not spending time baking for herself. Simultaneously, Jess was experiencing baking as a social activity by baking with her mother.

“My mom is like a huge baker, like she doesn't really- doesn't work full time so she is like always in the kitchen because she just loves baking and cooking. So, I would help her in quarantine, like we would be like- we'd make care packages for my friend, so we'd make, like, banana bread, pumpkin bread, like send cookies, brownies.[...] I would say the primary reason that I do bake is like, for like other people. And like- like I'm a huge, like, care package kind of person, I like, love sending those.”

(Jess, Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021)

These examples of giving baked goods to friends as a way to connect are consistent with Maussian gift-exchange theory. In giving baked goods as a gift, and not in exchange for money, Jenny and Jess were able to reproduce and strengthen social ties with their friends. Additionally, since their own labor was used to create the baked goods, the gift could be regarded as more personal and socially significant (Mauss, 2002). Rachel, a senior from the Midwest who picked up baking upon moving into an apartment for the fall semester, addressed this very concept when she shared:

“I feel like with my experience with the increase in baking, in my opinion it's because I- I used it as a way to connect with people and to show that I cared about them. So like, I never actually, like, would bake for myself, I would bake cookies for like my neighbor or

for my coworkers. Or something that always puts a smile on people's faces and food is just a way to, like, genuinely make everyone happy in a way. So, I kind of used that as a way to connect with people 'cause we couldn't really interact as much as we usually would.”

(Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

Media.

One of the most widespread ways in which Millennials and members of Generation Z connected with each other during the COVID-19 quarantine was through social media (Ostrovsky & Chen, 2020). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat allowed friends to stay in touch and up-to-date even from opposite sides of the world. However, the app that was most salient to the quarantine baking hobby was TikTok, a platform that allows users to share short videos with an unlimited audience (Anderson, 2020; Ostrovsky & Chen, 2020). Grace, a senior from the Midwest who only started baking upon beginning college, shared her experience with noticing different quarantine trends:

“So, I had a TikTok for like a little while and then I deleted it because it started to take up my whole life. But it like, personalizes the content for you with, you know as you like stuff, and I tended to like stuff that had to do with, like, nature and baking. Which is like the whole ‘cottagecore thing,’ I guess. I would get a lot of videos of that and whenever I would see a really beautiful baking video I was like “oh I want that to be me, like I want to feel like a rustic woman cooking bread.” [...] So, it was definitely, there was influence from other people. ”

(Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021)

In response, Valerie, a sophomore from the Midwest, shared:

“Yeah, I never had TikTok so I kinda like to think that I stayed away from that, like I wasn't influenced by that. But then TikTok started infiltrating my Instagram! But I definitely, like I said earlier, I think I kind of started baking banana bread before everybody else or at least before I started seeing it. But then I could start taking a lot of inspiration 'cause I saw more posts of people baking and I was like “oh if they did that I can do that” and then it kind of like pushed my skills to the next level, and that wouldn't have happened without quarantine.”

(Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021)

For these women, TikTok introduced them to the wider trend of baking during quarantine.

Grace's experience with TikTok, and the cultivation of videos tied to her interests, was one shared by several participants (Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021; Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021). Seeing others baking prompted a desire to do the same, especially with regard to the types of goods being produced. The concept of “cottagecore,” mentioned by Grace, is an aesthetic centered around performing domestic activities in a bucolic setting, and was frequently directed towards women, especially queer women, and romanticized homemade baked goods (Comerford, 2021). This newly popularized aesthetic, though not well-researched, may have then carried some weight in the emergence of a quarantine baking hobby. However, Valerie noted that her habit of baking developed outside of the context of social media. Yet, she was eventually encouraged to try new things as a result of seeing baking content. Annie also found herself motivated by social media to attempt new bakes.

“I enjoy trying new recipes anyway, so TikTok kind of kicking off like mid-March at a level that it hadn't, and I think everybody just kind of dove into that. And there was so

much content being put out, like there was that famous coffee that everybody tried. And I think at one point I made garlic knots from a recipe that was on there and I couldn't figure out the quantities because it wasn't clear enough and I was so annoyed, but they were good. But I think recipes, and it gives you a way of sharing knowledge that you might not have already, and people were bored and maybe this would give somebody a nice meal, or I don't know. I think TikTok definitely plays a larger role, at least in our generation, our age group, in getting in the kitchen and exploring like maybe yeasted breads or whatever."

(Annie, Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021)

As discussed above, excess time during quarantine provided a unique opportunity for bakers to experiment with new recipes and ingredients. From her own experience, Annie recognized that discovering recipes through a social media platform like TikTok was likely specific to her current demographic, college-aged individuals. Annie also mentions that not only were young adults encouraged to explore in their kitchens, they were encouraged to share their knowledge with others. TikTok allows users to spread content to an unlimited audience rather than restricting them to a "followers" list, as is the case with other platforms. Thus, when a user shares a video, they are connecting not only with their existing friends, but with potentially millions of other users. This allowed young adults to be exposed to the quarantine baking practices of bakers from across the globe, rather than solely within their personal networks.

Creating.

Slightly less common than the motivations of coping and connecting was the aspect of creating through baking. Annie, a sophomore from the East Coast, shifted from baking cookies

and brownies to recipes that involved more hands-on steps during quarantine. When asked about her experiences using her family's breadmaker, Annie responded:

“It was fun if I needed to do it quickly. But it's kind of a labor of love so it took away the kneading and the proofing and the timing it all out part.”

(Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021)

For Annie, the pleasure of baking came in the form of her active involvement in the baking process. With more availability in her day to try recipes for breads, which require more time for letting the dough rise or prove, Annie discovered an enjoyment for the time- and labor-intensive process. Using a breadmaker, which requires little involvement on the part of the baker, then eliminated the need for what she calls a “labor of love.” Thus, for Annie, the process of creating a baked good is just as, if not more, important than the final product. Similarly, Maggie, a senior from the East Coast who also began baking yeasted-foods during the COVID-19 quarantine, found enjoyment in the baking process.

“I think the best way to describe my experience with my baking is I'm always, like, really proud of my yeast when it rises. Like, that's my favorite part of the process. The rest of it, it can be a little tedious for me, like the cleaning up and everything. But like, when my yeast rises that makes up for everything, so I guess you would call it satisfying? I'm proud, I'm very proud.”

(Maggie, Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021)

While Maggie did not share Annie's love for the entirety of the process, she still found components of producing her own baked goods to be rewarding. These same feelings cannot exist when purchasing baked goods from a store because in these cases, the labor put into the production process is not their own. Maggie's pride in her yeast-risen dough was pride in her

ability to create something from scratch, using her own hands. For several participants, there was a similar feeling of accomplishment associated with producing homemade baked goods. Lauren, a junior from the West Coast who continued her love for baking throughout quarantine described:

“It felt good to like accomplish something. That's the thing, like I felt like I never accomplished anything, then baking it's like I could have, like, small things that I could like, complete and it's easy and mindless.”

(Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021)

With the restrictive guidelines of quarantine, several students experienced this feeling of being unproductive. As discussed earlier, students who were accustomed to heavy loads of coursework during the school year or engaging summer employment opportunities found themselves with excess idle time. In addition to serving as a coping mechanism for boredom, baking allowed students to create a tangible and consumable good, thus giving them the satisfaction of being productive (Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021; Focus Group 2, March 9, 2021; Focus Group 4, March 23, 2021). This sense of accomplishment was fueled both intrinsically, as in Lauren's case of seeing the outcomes of her labor, and extrinsically, as was the case for Maggie.

“Also, for me at home, definitely, it feels like I'm contributing because my parents normally make dinner and my mom gets really excited about bread- like yeast, because she can't make yeast work. So she's always really excited to have like, homemade bread and stuff. So I feel like I'm, you know, helping out, like, with making dinner.”

(Maggie, Focus Group 1, March 8, 2021)

This extrinsic motivation, of Maggie's mother being excited about the foods that she could bake, helped Maggie to identify her role in her family's quarantine lifestyle. Being able to contribute

to weekly dinners provided an opportunity for Maggie to be incorporated into her family's routine, which had adapted to Maggie's being away at college. Additionally, since homemade bread was not a necessity for the family, Maggie's baking produced an excess. This allowed her to feel a sense of accomplishment that would not have existed if she had instead been fulfilling a pre-existing practice in her home.

Jenny also made her first attempts at baking with yeast during quarantine, though her experiences were less successful than Annie's or Maggie's. However, though she did not always take pride in her final products, she appreciated the ability to explore the capabilities of her labor.

"I also used yeast for the first time [during quarantine], and it was definitely a rough process. I do distinctly remember I was trying to raise my focaccia overnight and I put it in the refrigerator in what I thought was a stable position, and I got a knock on my door from my dad saying that my dough was coating the entirety of the fridge. So, it was a learning process. I would say I am better at it now, but it was definitely- I think that it was one of those things that in the past I had never touched just 'cause it was really intimidating. But having the time to fail and not have anybody know about it, [...] having that time was really important for that."

(Jenny, Focus Group 3, March 11, 2021)

Being able to bake in private, with few expectations for the results of her work, was an ultimately rewarding experience for Jenny. She did not have the pressure of others awaiting her baked goods weighing on her so her instances of "failure" had few consequences. Instead, she was able to engage with the "learning process" of developing a new skill on her own time.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of college students with regard to baking during the COVID-19 quarantine. While the findings of this study offer insight into the practices and motivations of quarantine baking, they cannot be generalized to a larger population due to the focus on students attending a small, liberal arts college in the Midwest. Additionally, the survey respondents and focus group participants were not representative of the college student body as a whole, as there was an overrepresentation of woman-identifying individuals. This imbalance may have been in part due to the researcher's own social ties within the college, which exist predominantly amongst women. Another possible explanation is that the research topic attracted the attention of a particular demographic, prompting a higher response of women than other genders, though this is not necessarily explored in the study.

Survey data indicated that amongst the 139 respondents who had consistent access to a kitchen during both Summer 2019 and the quarantine period (March - August) of 2020, there was an increase in baking during the latter time period. This data was further examined to answer the question: Who was baking? It was found that respondents who were frequent bakers during Summer 2019 were more likely to be baking during quarantine than previously infrequent bakers. This correlation was expected, as those who had experience in baking prior to the pandemic likely had an easier time continuing the activity than those who set out to learn a new skill. Experienced bakers may have also been familiar with the positive feelings associated with baking which may have encouraged them to continue the habit through this stressful time period. Women were also more likely to be baking during quarantine than men. In considering the implications of this finding, it is important to note the unequal representation of genders amongst respondents, as discussed above, though it is unclear how a more equal distribution of genders

may have affected these results. However, the higher likelihood of women baking may not be entirely inaccurate. Baking has consistently been a gendered activity, closely associated with motherhood and the woman's role to cook and provide for others (Hollingsworth & Tyyska, 1988; Lupton, 1996; Daniels et. al., 2012; Bowen et. al., 2020). This association has persisted over time, and though the gender balance of household tasks may be beginning to equalize, baking is still considered to be a primarily feminine activity. Another group found to be more likely to be quarantine bakers was domestic students. The representation of domestic and international students in the sample was reflective of the college student population. A possible explanation for this finding is that a large number of international students attending the college, and who participated in the study, are from Eastern Asian countries, where baking is not a common practice. In these locations a trend of baking may not have been as prominent as a result of its minimal presence prior to COVID-19.

Reported sexuality was also examined in relation to baking during quarantine, though there was no evidence of correlation. While very little research has examined relationships between sexuality and baking, the researcher was surprised by the lack of correlation with regard to their own observations. The previously discussed "cottagecore" aesthetic was observed to be especially popular amongst queer women, though there is little evidence that this concept had any effect on baking habits. Additionally, there was no evidence to suggest that a respondent's department of study was related to baking during quarantine. This is understandable as no areas of study offered at the college directly pertain to cooking or baking, as might be the case at a culinary or other technical school. Finally, race and socioeconomic class were not found to be correlated with quarantine baking habits. Historically, differences in baking habits have not existed across lines of race, and the results of this study were consistent with this (Lupton, 1996;

Daniels et al., 2012; Bowen et al., 2020). With regard to socioeconomic class, these findings suggest that baking was not restricted to any specific class within the sample population. Thus, baking was likely not exclusive to the upper-class who may have had increased access to ingredients and appliances, nor used by members of the lower-class to combat food insecurity.

Survey and focus group data was used to answer the question: What were people baking? Participants reported a wide range of recipes in their baking endeavors, ranging from sourdough bread requiring a yeast starter to family recipes of traditional holiday cookies. Of the three identified categories of baked goods -yeasted breads, quick breads, and sweets- sweets were the most frequently reported food being baked. While this can likely be attributed to the multitude of goods that are contained in the “sweets” category, it may also be indicative of a leaning towards sweet comfort foods during times of stress. This would be consistent with existing literature regarding the connections between comfort foods and positive memories of childhood (Locher et al., 2006; Kandiah et al., 2006; Spence, 2017; Bowen et al., 2020).

The use of focus groups also allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the question: Why were people baking? One explanation that took several forms was that people were baking in order to cope. For some, this meant coping with boredom. Many United States residents experienced a significant shift in their lifestyles at the beginning of the pandemic due to schools and workplaces being closed, and found themselves with excess time on their hands. College students, especially, found this to be the case as their typical summer plans of employment or travel ceased to exist. As a way to fill this time, several participants turned to baking. The time-intensive nature of baking, especially for recipes that require time for dough to rise or rest, made baking an attractive pastime for students with excessive free time. Baking was also reported to be a valuable mechanism for coping with stress. The initial lockdown in the

United States introduced a multitude of unfamiliar sources of stress: daily routines were required to change and individuals found nearly all aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic to be outside of their control. For several participants, baking provided a necessary relief from this stress. As a practice that does not require significant analytical thinking or decision-making, baking functioned as an effective distraction from otherwise heavy thoughts. Bakers were also able to rely on the consistency of the baking process and regain a sense of control over their surroundings through the physical act of following a recipe. Additionally, baking provided participants with homemade comfort foods such as cookies, cakes, and sweet breads. The familiar aromas and tastes allowed students to draw upon positive memories affiliated with these foods and find comfort in an otherwise discomforting time. Finally, baking and cooking were used to cope with changes in meal sources. The college attended by the participants is a 4-year residential university, thus dining halls supply the majority of students with their meals. Upon returning home, one participant found herself responsible for feeding herself as her single-mom continued to work and pick up extra shifts. This participant was then required to begin cooking and baking more frequently for the sake of providing herself with meals.

Baking was also used as a way to connect with others. These connections took place via collaborative baking, synchronous virtual baking, and the gifting of baked goods. Several respondents mentioned baking with other members of their household, including siblings and mothers, during their quarantine. For some, this was a method of collectively coping with boredom as several siblings found themselves with nothing else to do. By baking together, and persisting through a difficult time together, these participants were able to establish new forms of connections with family members. For others, the efforts to connect were more deliberate. As students found themselves at home and reunited with their families, it became noticeable that

quarantine involved a longer time spent with family than some students had experienced in years. This required some participants to find new ways, such as baking, in which they could connect with family members with whom they shared few interests. By identifying a common interest in baking, siblings were able to spend quality time with one another. For two participants, this quality time was replicated virtually. Returning home meant that these two friends would no longer be able to spend time together as they typically would on campus. In order to maintain this connection, the friends decided to share recipes with one another and bake synchronously over Zoom. This proved to be a valuable way to maintain communication that involved engaging in a shared activity. Finally, one of the most common ways in which baking was used to connect was through the exchange of baked goods as gifts. Several respondents described using baked goods as a form of connection, either by sending care packages to long-distance friends or hand-delivering sweets and sharing in conversation. Even more respondents discussed the feeling of joy and sense of bonding provided by sharing baked goods with others. By giving baked goods to friends and family, participants were able to show care and appreciation, even from a distance. These forms of connection were especially important during quarantine when social interactions became increasingly difficult due to social-distancing guidelines.

A broader form of connection that was discussed was the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok. TikTok, in particular, was discussed as a prominent site of baking-related content. Participants discussed how videos of others baking inspired them to try new recipes and techniques, especially when comparing the perceived difficulty of recipes to their own abilities. The use of social media encouraged bakers to share knowledge with one another, delve into diverse cuisines, and challenge their baking limitations.

It was through social media that participants recognized that quarantine baking had become a global trend unique to Millennials and Generation Z.

Focus group participants also discussed baking as a form of creation. Students were able to take raw ingredients and transform them into a finished product that was both functional and satisfying. Several participants mentioned feeling a sense of pride or accomplishment while baking, as they were able to develop new skills such as baking with yeast or successfully following a new recipe. A sense of productivity was also common amongst bakers. The ability to work on something over time, which resulted in a tangible product, allowed participants to feel as though they were accomplishing something meaningful with their time. This was a feeling that had become less common during the quarantine period as students found themselves with fewer responsibilities and ways to occupy their time. Baking within this context also allowed students to experience a connection between themselves and the product of their labor, a concept which counters the ever-occurring alienation of laborers from their work within capitalist systems. Rather than working on a product that was to be sold, or a project that was required for a course, participants were able to create something by and for themselves. This act, dubbed “socially-useful doing,” is a direct combatant to alienation. By engaging in this socially-useful doing, baking as a hobby, students were able to make a small escape from oppressive capitalist structures. In using baked goods to establish and maintain social ties, bringing joy and sustenance to friends and family, participants found themselves heartened by those around them despite the stressful nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The implications of this study are hopeful. The experiences and perspectives of the participating college students suggest that baking as a hobby is an act of socially-useful doing that allows students to find comfort and connect with others amidst stressful circumstances.

With this knowledge, students may be able to identify other ways in which they can combat alienation within our current capitalist system. Further, while students may not continue to bake at such a high frequency outside of quarantine, participants may reflect on the positive impacts of baking during high-stress periods. Recognizing this may remind students of the existence of baking as a useful coping mechanism that can be employed throughout their college years.

Future research on this topic should expand to include a more representative sample of Millennials and members of Generation Z. Broadening the pool of participants to include individuals not enrolled in, or who have not attended, college may provide greater insight into the relationships of race and socioeconomic class with baking as a quarantine hobby. Future studies may also examine the prevalence of baking throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, seeking to determine if baking as socially-useful doing will be a lasting trend.

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